Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
Center for the Study of Early Christianity
MA Program in Early Christian Studies
PhD Program in Early Christian Studies
AY 2009-10

Key Assessment Findings

During AY 2008-09 and 2009-10, in order to preserve confidentiality, the analysis and presentation of the comprehensive exam results are omitted in this report, due the very small number of students taking the exam in each academic year. Aggregated data will be presented in the five-year report.

Curricular Improvements

As reported in our memorandum of November 20, 2008, our curriculum was fundamentally redesigned in 1998, when the Center for the Study of Early Christianity was established, and again in 2005, when we changed our funding structure. The 1998 curriculum was substantially reviewed, when we started admitting students once again in 2007. Our Statement of Goals allows for a curriculum review every five years, and we therefore anticipate further curricular modifications, if deemed necessary, in 2012.

Rubrics and data-collecting forms have been prepared for use with students entering the program in 2009 and beyond, in accordance with the details contained in our "Goals, and Assessment of Student Outcomes" document. These rubrics are utilized to assess students' performance in the MA/PhD comprehensive exams (see Table 1). Because of the small number of students taking the comps, outcome scores of the rubrics are not presented here.

Table 1 Rubrics for MA/PhD Comprehensive Exam

	Exceeds Expectations (3 pts)	Meets Expectations (2 pts)	Below Expectations (1 pt)
Historical Context	• Able to range seamlessly across the early Christian period, placing each question in its correct context. • Able to connect the answer to each individual question with other contemporary developments. • Able to identify	• Shows good understanding of the underlying chronological architecture of the early Christian period. • Mentions major contemporary events that lie beyond the immediate framework of the	• Presents a fragmented or disjointed picture of any given sequence of events. • Unable to reach beyond the immediate chronological confines of the question. • Has no sense of development. • Content with narrative description

	and explain factors that distinguish one historical period (within the "early Christian" timeframe) from another. • Reaches beyond narrative and chronology, to discuss causes, explanations, and discontinuities.	question. • Shows an understanding of change and difference in historical development • Presents an illustrated argument that is more than merely descriptive.	unalleviated by any other logical consideration.
Authors	• Wholly familiar with the biography of the author concerned. • Can identify significant family members, friends, and colleagues of the author.	• Can identify the significant moments of the author's career. • Knows something of the author's immediate associates.	• Demonstrates little or no knowledge of the author's life. • Has, in social terms, a predominantly isolated impression of the author.
Authors (cont.)	• Understands the settings within which the author developed, and the traditions that those settings represented. • Knows what else the author wrote and how the texts under consideration are related to that wider *œuvre*. • Able to identify and discuss the distinguishing traits of the author concerned.	• Knows where the author developed and worked as a writer. • Refers to at least some writings by the author beyond those immediately referred to in the question. • Aware of traits peculiar to the author.	• Equally, isolates the author from both the circumstances of his/her formation and from his/her literary tradition. • Makes no reference to the author's other work (where evidence of it exists). • Shows no awareness that the author is in any way distinctive.

Genres	• Shows clear understanding of the distinctions among a wide range of rhetorical and literary forms. • Knows the criteria by which *genres* were traditionally distinguished one from another. • Understands the different settings within which this or that *genre* was considered appropriate. • Displays a sense of how different *genres* developed over time. • Able to identify precisely the *genre* to which a work under immediate discussion belongs.	• Able to distinguish between major *genres*—history, law, letters, dialogue. • Understands how choices were made by writers, and how the choices affected both content and style. • Understands why the choices were made, in relation to setting. • Recognizes that *genres* changed over time. • Allows his/her interpretation to be directly influenced by the *genre*.	• Does not recognize distinctions of *genre*. • Does not recognize that choice of *genre* will affect both content and style. • Does not relate *genre* to setting. • Has no sense of historical development in literary forms. • Does not allude to *genre* in the course of his/her analysis.
Audience	• Recognizes explicitly that the author's sense of audience will have affected both content and style. • Able to identify and describe both the audience envisaged by the writer and the audience most immediately affected by the text (if different or additional). • Able to assess the presence and impact of audiences' patronage,	• Aware that the author's sense of audience will have affected both content and style. • Able to identify and describe the audience envisaged by the writer. • Makes substantial reference to audience expectations.	• Pays little or no attention to a writer's awareness of audience. • Unable to identify the likely audience of the text. • Does not take into consideration what audiences

	expectation, and request. • Able to gauge to what degree writer and audience occupied the same cultural *milieu.*	• Recognizes the significance of writers and audiences sharing or not sharing a cultural *milieu.*	may have expected or demanded. • Has so sense of a shared (or not shared) cultural *milieu.*
Influence	• Identifies the immediate impact of the text, or attempts to judge (where evidence is less helpful) what the impact was likely to have been. • Identifies the longer-term impact of the text. • Reflects on the time and distance associated with such an impact.	• Identifies the immediate impact of the text (where evidence available). • Raises the question of the longer-term impact of the text. • Aware that the time and distance associated with such an impact is likely to be important.	• Shows little or no awareness of a text's immediate impact. • Shows little or no awareness of a text's longer-term impact. • Has no sense of the chronological or territorial dimension of textual influence.
Influence (cont.)	• Appreciates that texts can have different impacts over a longer period of time. • Shows an understanding of the processes that affect a text's longer life (collection, edition, adaptation, translation). • Shows some	• Aware of the phases of a text's longer-term impact. • Alludes where relevant to identifiable adjustments to a text over the time of transmission. • Makes reference to	• Has no sense that the character of a text's impact can change over time. • Shows no understanding of transmission. • Shows no interest in authenticity.

	understanding of problems connected with attribution, forgery, and use alien to the apparent purposes of the author.	issues of authenticity.	
Theology and Philosophy	- Shows a detailed understanding of all theological opinions (in their historical form) relevant to the question. - Understands the nature of doctrinal development. - Understands why some theological opinions endured while others were rejected. - Able to distinguish between debate intrinsic to theological opinion and changes affected or influenced by non-theological factors.	- Shows an understanding of the major theological opinions (in their historical form) relevant to the question. - Understands the nature of doctrinal development. - Identifies major "heresies" and understands the processes of "orthodox" affirmation. - Distinguishes between theological and circumstantial influences on doctrinal debate.	- Confused about theological opinions relevant to the question. - Shows no sense of doctrinal development. - Confused about the interaction between "heretical" and "orthodox" traditions. - Content to ignore or downplay the substance of theological opinion.

Theology and Philosophy (cont.)	• Aware of the effect of confessional scholarship on historical interpretation. • Able to identify a range of scholars and scholarly traditions relevant to the portrayal of the early Christian past. • Able to identify and discuss (where required) the impact of major discoveries (e.g. Nag Hammadi) • Able to identify all the philosophical "schools" of antiquity and to assess their impact on Christian thought and culture.	• Able to identify major confessional variations in historical scholarship. • Shows some understanding of the progress, preoccupation, and pattern of early Christian scholarship in recent centuries. • Explicitly aware of major discoveries that have affected historical interpretation. • Able to distinguish, with reference to major figures and texts, between Stoic and Platonist traditions, and understand their specific impact on Christian thought and culture.	• Has no sense of confessional distinctions in scholarly debate. • Makes no reference to the development of early Christian scholarship. • Unaware of major discoveries that have affected historical interpretation. • Makes little reference to ancient philosophy and shows no detailed acquaintance with major figures and movements.
Historiography	• Able to identify and discuss scholarly opinion and methodology over at least the past 150 years. • Able to identify and discuss traditions of	• Recognition of scholarly traditions (interpretation and methodology) since the 1920s. • A clear sense of scholarly debate since 1945	• Little clear sense of the development of scholarship in the field. • Fails to appreciate the processes of edition and commentary.

	interpretation and debate over the past 150 years relative to the primary material under discussion.	relative to primary material most immediately associated with the student's likely dissertation topic.	
Historiog raphy (cont.)	• Able to identify successions of influence among distinct groups of scholars over several decades, and understands the significance of that succession. • Shows a critical understanding of theory (with explicit reference to, e.g., textual, linguistic, and cognitive reflections). • Explores the impact of other disciplines (e.g. anthropology) on the early Christian field.	• Takes into consideration, with explicit recognition of significant scholars, the successive impact of scholar upon scholar within the field of inquiry relevant to the question. • Makes apposite reference to theoretical issues relevant to the question. • Makes constructive reference to other disciplines.	• Shows no sense of one scholar's impact upon another over a period of time. • Shows little or no theoretical awareness. • Does not mention the influence of other disciplines.
Languages	• Mastery of all classical grammatical and syntactical forms. • Translation effected with few and minor	• Clear understanding of common grammatical and syntactical forms. • Translation effected without	• Persistent misunderstanding of common grammatical forms. • Failure in translation, to a degree that misrepresents the

	errors.	essential misunderstanding of sentences and of the logical sequence within sections/paragraphs.	overall meaning of more than a quarter of the sentences within any one section/paragraph.
	• All ancient words and phrases outside quotations correctly declined/conjugated to fit English syntax.	• Most ancient words outside quotations correctly declined/conjugated to fit English syntax.	• Unable to use nominative or infinitive forms of isolated ancient words.